

## AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A communications system for transmitting forward and reverse cable television signals, the communications system comprising:

a plurality of optical nodes including a reverse transmitter, each optical node for receiving reverse analog signals from a plurality of subscriber equipment and for providing reverse digital optical signals, each reverse transmitter comprising:

a converter for converting said reverse analog signals signal into digitized reverse signals a digitized reverse signal;

a carrier-detect circuit coupled to the converter for detecting the presence of a carrier signal in the reverse analog signals signal;

a delay circuit coupled to the converter for delaying the digitized reverse signals digitized reverse signal; and

a switch coupled to the delay circuit and controlled by the carrier-detect circuit, wherein the reverse transmitter transmits the digitized reverse signals reverse digital optical signal only in the presence of a detected carrier signal; and

a reverse receiver, coupled to the plurality of optical nodes via a digital network, for receiving and passively combining the reverse digital optical signals signal from each of the plurality of optical nodes,

wherein the plurality of optical nodes, reverse receiver, or any other device in the digital network passively combines the reverse digital optical signals from the plurality of optical nodes without performing wave-division performs no form of multiplexing on the reverse analog signals received digital optical signals.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously Presented) The communications system of claim 1, further comprising:

the reverse receiver coupled to the digital network for receiving the combined reverse digital optical signals, and for converting the combined reverse digital optical signals to analog signals; and

a headend coupled to the reverse receiver for receiving and processing the analog signals,

whereby, due to a burst-mode transmission from each of the plurality of optical nodes, the digital network combines the reverse digital optical signals from the plurality of optical nodes using header identifier information.

4. (Previously Presented) The communications system of claim 3, wherein the communications system is a cable television system that may include both a digital headend and an analog headend for generating and receiving combined digital optical signals in both the digital and the analog formats.

5. (Previously Presented) The communications system of claim 4, wherein the communications system further includes:

    a descriminator circuit coupled to the digital network for analyzing the header identifier information contained in the passively combined reverse digital optical signals,  
    wherein dependent upon the header identifier information, the descriminator circuit provides the combined reverse digital optical signals to one of the digital headend and the analog headend.

6. (Currently Amended) A communications system for transmitting and receiving optical signals over a communications medium, the communications system comprising:

    subscriber equipment for transmitting reverse electrical signals;  
    a plurality of transmitters coupled to at least one of the subscriber equipment for converting the reverse electrical signals into reverse digital optical signals having a predetermined wavelength, wherein each of the plurality of transmitters comprising:

        a carrier-detect circuit for detecting the presence of a reverse carrier signal;  
        a delay circuit for preventing loss of information in the reverse signal due to the carrier-detect circuit; and  
        a switch, coupled to the delay circuit and controlled by the carrier-detect circuit, wherein when the carrier-detect circuit detects a reverse carrier signal present in said reverse signal, the carrier-detect circuit allows the reverse signal to be converted to a reverse digital optical signal and transmitted upstream through a digital network;

    the digital network, coupled to each of the plurality of transmitters, for passively combining the reverse digital optical signals ~~without wave division multiplexing~~;

    a receiver coupled to the digital network for converting the reverse digital optical signals back to the original reverse signals; and

    a headend coupled to the receiver for processing the reverse signals,  
wherein the subscriber equipment, the plurality of transmitters, the digital network, and the receiver perform no form of multiplexing on the reverse signals.

7. (Canceled)

8. (Canceled)

9. (Previously Presented) The communications system of claim 6, wherein each of the plurality of transmitters formats said reverse digital optical signals as packets with associated identifier header information for identification within the headend.

10. (Original) The communications system of claim 9, wherein the communications system is a cable television system that may include both a digital headend and an analog headend.

11. (Original) The communications system of claim 10, wherein the communications system further comprises:

    a descriminator circuit coupled to the digital network for analyzing the associated identifier header information,

    wherein dependent upon the identifier header information, the descriminator circuit provides the packets to one of the digital headend and the analog headend.

12. (Original) The communications system of claim 6, wherein the communications medium is a hybrid fiber coaxial cable.

13. (Original) The communications system of claim 10, wherein a control system is used in connection with both the digital and the analog headends for preventing collision of the reverse signals.

14. (Currently Amended) The communications system of claim 6, wherein at least one of said plurality of optical transmitters further comprises an analog-to-digital converter for converting an analog reverse electrical signal to a digitized reverse electrical signal, wherein said optical transmitter converts said digitized reverse electrical signal to provide said reverse digital optical signal.

15. (Previously Presented) The communications system of claim 14, wherein said carrier-detect circuit is coupled to the output of said analog-to-digital converter.

16. (Currently Amended) A method for conducting reverse communications in a subscriber television system, comprising:

    receiving at an optical transmitter reverse signals ~~a reverse signal~~ from a plurality of subscriber equipment;

    converting said reverse signals signal to a reverse digital optical signals signal only when the presence of a reverse carrier signal is detected by a carrier-detect circuit;

    transmitting said reverse digital optical signals signal upstream to a digital network;

    passively combining a plurality of said reverse digital optical signals received from a plurality of optical transmitters at a digital network without the use of wave division multiplexers; and

    converting at a receiver said plurality of reverse digital optical signals back to a plurality of said reverse signals.

wherein the plurality of subscriber equipment, the optical transmitter, the digital network, and the receiver perform no form of multiplexing on the reverse signals.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, further comprising converting an analog reverse signal to a digitized reverse signal by using an analog-to-digital converter.
18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, wherein said reverse digital optical signal is formatted in packets and combining is performed using header identifier information contained in said packets.
19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, wherein said plurality of reverse digital optical signals are transmitted at a common wavelength and combined at said common wavelength.
20. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, further comprising:  
providing said reverse digital optical signals to one of an analog headend and a digital headend.
21. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20, wherein said reverse digital optical signals are formatted in packets and provided to one of said analog headend and said digital headend based on analysis of packet header information by a desriminator circuit.
22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 16, further comprising decombining said combined plurality of reverse digital optical signals without the use of wave division multiplexers.